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FREE MINDS FOR A FREE SOCIETY



Fear is one of the most powerful human emotions. While highly useful in situations where threat of immediate harm exists, it is the most debilitating and dangerous of emotions when present unnecessarily. In this video we will examine how fear can be used as a tool to manipulate others, and how those in positions of power, past and present, have effectively used fear to control certain aspects of society.

Humans, especially since the Industrial Revolution, have become increasingly protected from the dangers that our ancestors faced in relation to the natural world. But as mankind's fear of nature and the elements has fallen, in its place many other fears have come to fill the void. Some of these fears have arisen in response to real threats, but many have been in response to things imagined.

As the Stoic philosopher Seneca pointed out:

"There are more things...likely to frighten us than there are to crush us; we suffer more often in imagination than in reality." ([Letters from a Stoic, Seneca](#))

While some of these imagined fears are of one's own making, many are the consequence of narratives created by those in positions of power. Individuals looking to take advantage of, and manipulate others, have long realized the power of fear. When one is gripped by fear of a threat, real or imagined, their rational and higher cognitive capacities shut down, making them easily manipulable by anyone that promises safety from the threat.

"No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear", wrote the 18th century philosopher Edmund Burke.

Ruling classes for thousands of years have understood the power of intentionally invoking fear in their subjects as a means of social control. Henri Frankfort, in his book *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, noted that between 1800 and 1600 BC a fear psychosis spread through Ancient

Egypt, precipitated by the invasion of foreign rebels hungry for power and conquest. Initially this fear psychosis was justified by a real threat, yet even when these foreigners were successfully driven far away from Egypt, the ruling powers sought to artificially maintain fear among the population – realizing that a fearful population is easier to control than a fearless one.

As Frankfort explained:

“The common desire for security need not have survived after the Egyptian Empire extended the military frontier of Egypt well into Asia and thus removed the peril from the immediate frontier...However, it was a restless age, and there were perils on the distant horizon which could be invoked to hold the community together, since unity was to the advantage of certain central powers...A fear psychosis, once engendered, remained present. And there were forces in Egypt which kept alive this fear psychosis in order to maintain the unified purpose of Egypt.” ([*The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, Henri Frankfort*](#))

The artificial construction and maintenance of fear in a population by a ruling class has remained pervasive from the time of Ancient Egypt up until the modern day. Oppressive governments often maintain their grip on a nation by continually invoking fear, and then proceeding to claim that only they, the ruling powers, have the means and ability to protect the population from such a threat:

“The whole aim of practical politics”, wrote HL Mencken, “is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, most of them imaginary.”

John Adams, one of the founding fathers of America, echoed this sentiment writing “*Fear is the foundation of most governments*”.

While there are numerous tactics and strategies that have developed over the centuries to effectively exploit the public through fear, two of the more powerful and efficient are the use of false flags, and the implementation of propaganda via repetition.

A false flag can be defined as a “covert operation . . . designed to deceive in such a way that the operations appear as though they are being carried out by entities, groups, or nations other than those who actually planned and executed them”. In his book *Feardom*, Conor Boyack provides a nice explanation on the effectiveness of false flag attacks for those looking to institute social control:

“...physical attacks lead to a corresponding increase of trust in political leaders and submission to them. This effect is likely the same whether the attack be a surprise, known to political leaders yet allowed to happen, or directly orchestrated by these same leaders who stand to benefit from the increased trust and submission...False flag operations are used because people generally do not have access to the details, so they are prone to rely upon what they’re told, and thus are easily deceived. People will, for the most part, believe what they are told in times of crisis, and so government officials, whether their motives are good or evil, capitalize on or completely fabricate the crises.” ([*Feardom: How Politicians Exploit Your Emotions and What You Can Do to Stop Them, Conor Boyack*](#))

Repetition is also a well-known and prevalent propaganda technique used to solidify falsehoods and perpetuate fear in the public consciousness. By repeating specific phrases and warnings, and

displaying particular symbols and images over and over through various mediums, those in power are able to paralyze entire populations with a fear psychosis.

The Nazi Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels was well aware of the power of repetition in cloaking falsehoods in a garb of truth, stating:

“It would not be impossible to prove with sufficient repetition and a psychological understanding of the people concerned that a square is in fact a circle. They are mere words, and words can be molded until they clothe ideas in disguise.” (Joseph Goebbels)

George Orwell, in a related manner, viewed political language as largely a form of propaganda designed to deceive people, as he wrote:

“Political language. . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” (George Orwell)

The technological advances of the last century have given those in power the ability to propagate their narratives and engage in fear mongering to an extent never before seen in history. However, despite the unnerving situation we find ourselves in, there is an antidote to the power of propaganda and fear mongering: that being, knowledge.

Plato rightly stated that *“ignorance is the root of misfortune”*, and as long as we remain ignorant of the fact that all too often those who claim to protect us from fear are actually manipulating our fears for their own benefit, then we will be contributing to the misfortune of the world through our ignorant compliance.

The philosopher Voltaire stated that *“Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.”* To avoid being an individual who can be convinced of absurdities, one must become an active truth seeker, instead of an all too common passive propaganda receiver. An important step in becoming an active truth seeker is the realization that when evaluating the claims of those in power, skepticism is warranted and even necessary. Very often those who rule do not have the best interests of the public at heart; for as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn put it *“political genius lies in extracting success even from the people’s ruin.”*

The reality is that most of us are not in a position to single-handedly change the world, but we can at least try to rid ourselves of the unnecessary fears which are the fuel for so much hate and destruction in the world. In fact, taking responsibility for one’s own actions and the beliefs that motivate such actions, may be the most important thing one can do when faced with the prospect of an oppressive government. For as Stanley Milgram noted: “The disappearance of a sense of responsibility is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority.” And furthermore, might there be truth to the comment by F.A. Harper’s that “the man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free.”

At this point some may be thinking that while the use of fear by those in power certainly contributed to horrible situations in the past, most notably in the totalitarian states of Russia, Germany and China in the 20th century, Western nations of the present are far from approaching a situation so dire. Hopefully that is true, but it is important to realize that those who have lived through the rise of oppressive governments have seldom realized the perilous situation they were in until it was too late. We will conclude this lecture with a fascinating but ominous passage from the book *They Thought They Were Free*, which is based on interviews with normal Germans who lived

during the Nazi regime. The following quote comes from one of the German's interviewed, where he discusses why he thought that more ordinary Germans didn't take a stand against the rise of the Nazi government.

"One doesn't see exactly where or how to move. Believe me, this is true. Each act, each occasion, is worse than the last, but only a little worse... You wait for one great shocking occasion, thinking that others, when such a shock comes, will join with you in resisting somehow..."

But the one great shocking occasion, when tens or hundreds or thousands will join with you, never comes. That's the difficulty. If the last and worst act of the whole regime had come immediately after the first and smallest, thousands, yes, millions would have been sufficiently shocked ... But of course this isn't the way it happens. In between comes all the hundreds of little steps, some of them imperceptible, each of them preparing you not to be shocked by the next...

And one day, too late, your principles, if you were ever sensible of them, all rush in upon you. The burden of self-deception has grown too heavy, and some minor incident. . collapses it all at once, and you see that everything – everything – has changed...Now you live in a world of hate and fear, and the people who hate and fear do not even know it themselves; when everyone is transformed, no one is transformed..." ([They Thought They Were Free, Milton Mayer](#))